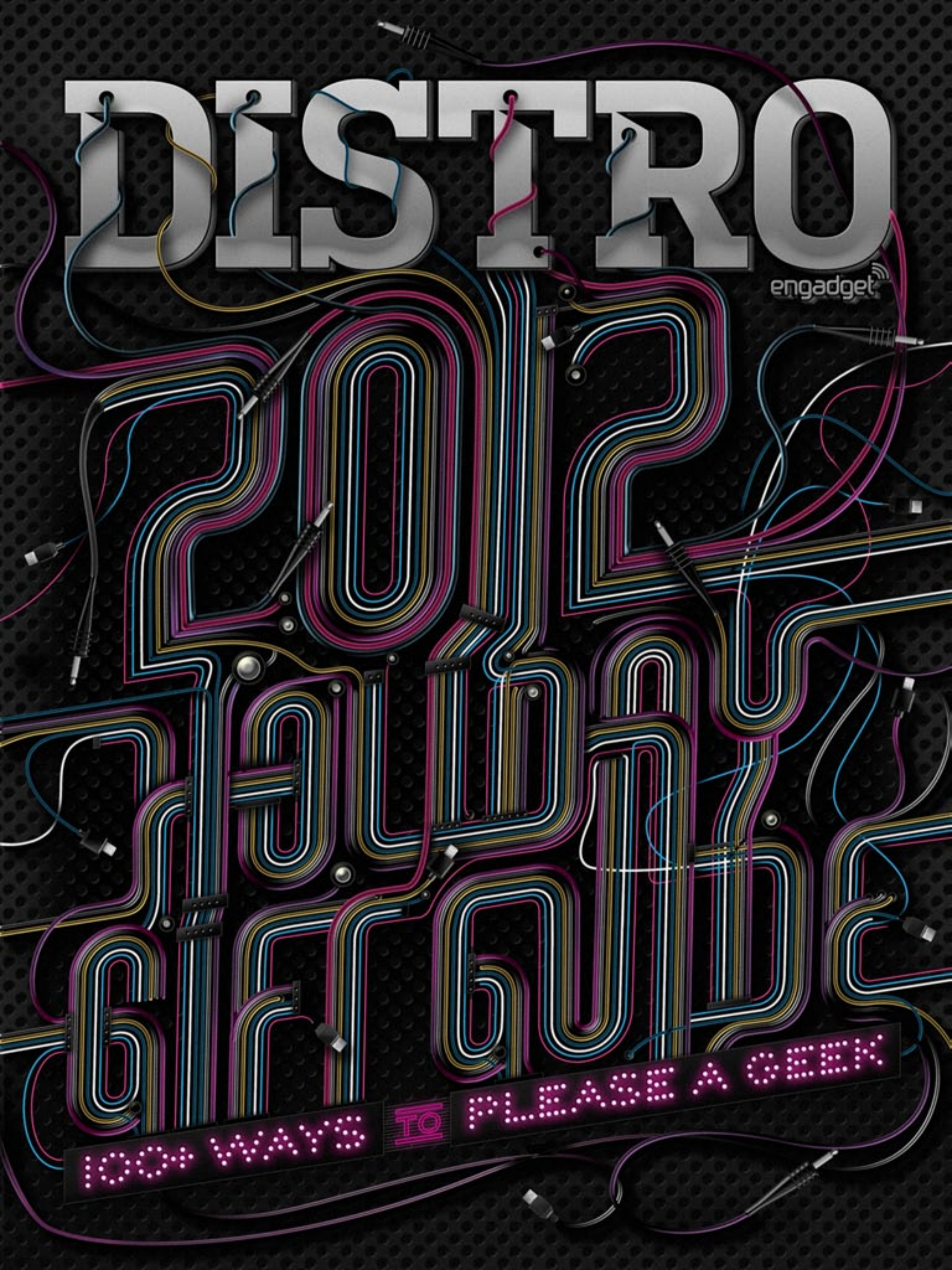


# DISTRO

engadget

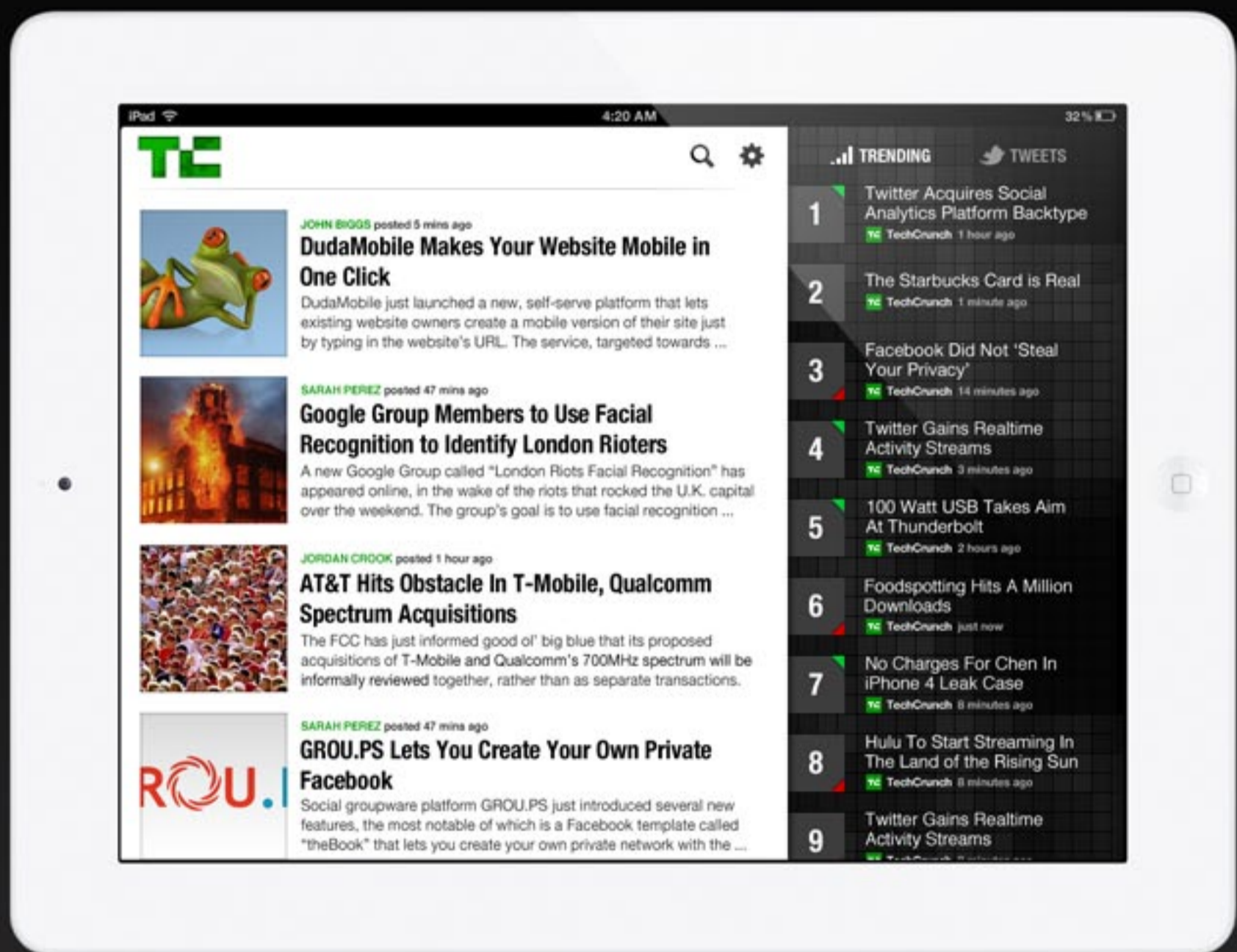


NOW WAYS TO PLEASE A GEEK



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# ISSUE 66

DISTRO

11.16.12

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# DROID DOES PHABLET

DISTRO  
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EDITOR'S  
LETTER



**A**s expected, this week HTC and Verizon took the wraps off the Droid DNA, a new 5-inch superphone with an outrageous 440ppi LCD. Do the math and that equates to a 1,920 x 1,080 display — yes, a 1080p smartphone is coming soon to the US, and priced at just \$199. That seems like a particularly fair price, but this version is tragically gimped, offering only 16GB of storage and lacking a microSD card slot. The Japanese version offers both more storage and expandability, and it's waterproof too. Shafted again, dear readers. Shafted again.

But the price is certainly right, and we're guessing the quad-core 1.5GHz Snapdragon S4 Pro processor with 2GB of RAM will more than hold up its end of the bargain. The question is whether this phone is good enough to dethrone the Galaxy Note II from its current position as king of the economy-sized smartphones. I've been spending a few days testing out the Note II myself and I must say I'm finding the stylus more useful than I thought. Will a 1080p display and decidedly more striking styling be enough to woo shoppers away? I look forward to trying out the DNA to compare.

Google put the Nexus 4, Nexus 7 3G and

Nexus 10 up for sale this week. It took only a few minutes for the \$299, 8GB Nexus 4 to sell out in an online buying frenzy that caused Google's retail servers to bend and break like so many trees in an ice storm. The Nexus 10 and the new Nexus 7 with HSPA+, meanwhile, are still very much available for ordering. And should you pick up said 7-incher, know that the 4.2 update to Jelly Bean is now available. It's also rolled out to some Galaxy Nexus devices.

Microsoft shocked us this week by announcing the departure of Windows lead Steven Sinofsky, a man we met with just a few weeks ago to talk Surface and Windows 8 before their respective launches. Steven's long been a driving force behind Microsoft's OS and has recently been the company's most visible face for Surface, espousing that tablet's virtues — and durability, by famously turning one into a skateboard.

His departure comes so closely to the release of those two products — Windows 8 and Surface for Windows RT — that it's incredibly hard to not see this departure as related in some way. But, Steven's email to the company explaining his departure strongly reiterates that it was




## “HTC and Apple finally put away their legal blunderbusses and called a truce.”

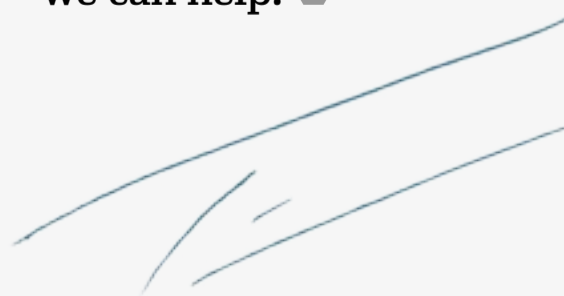
his personal decision. Knowing what a long, hard road driving both those things to production must have been, frankly I don't doubt that the dude needed some time to step away and recuperate. I hope he's able to find it.

RIM announced a launch event for BlackBerry 10 and, while the company didn't tell us exactly where it's happening, we do at least have a date: January 30th. This means it's a few weeks after the conclusion of CES, the venue we'd been thinking might mark the return of RIM to the fold of companies actually releasing new products. Instead we'll have to wait a few more weeks to finally see everything the outfit has slowly been piecing together for the past year and change. It had better be good.

HTC and Apple finally put away their legal blunderbusses and called a truce after more than two years of a feisty battle that never matched the Samsung conflict for its intensity, but nevertheless proved rather long-lasting. The terms of the settlement were not disclosed, naturally, so it's unknown exactly who is the loser here (and, more critically, just how big of a loser they were), but we do know that the terms of the settlement cover all current and future patents for a period of 10 years. So, we can take this pair of plaintiffs out of the patent prospecting pool for at least another decade.

Finally, and impressively, *Motor Trend* announced its selection for 2013 Car of the Year and the winner is something special: the Tesla Model S. The American-made electric BMW-beater has certainly taken many people in the greater Silicon Valley area by storm (I counted two on the Google campus alone this week) and it's great to see such a machine wooing the old-school auto journalists, too. It has certainly enchanted me, and I still haven't had the chance to drive one yet.

In this week's Distro you can catch our early impressions of the Droid DNA plus the results of our tests of Gogo's next in-air WiFi service: ATG-4. We also have Recommended Reading, a new comic from Box Brown on the horrors of holiday shopping and a look at how the Empire State Building called the election. But, of course, the big story here is our Holiday Gift Guide. We're getting shockingly close to the holidays and I am shockingly far away from checking a single soul off of my shopping list. If you, like me, are struggling to figure out what to get some special gadget lover in *your* life, maybe we can help. 



TIM STEVENS  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF,  
ENGADGET



# TABLET WAFFLING, SURFACE STREAMING AND BENCHING THE NEXUS



Touch article names  
to read full threads

DISTRO  
11.16.12

INBOX



NEXUS 10  
ISSUE 65,  
NOVEMBER 9TH, 2012

“Google’s intentions are not to compete directly with iPad. Nexus 10 is just a showcase for future Android tablets. If Google wanted to directly compete with iPad they could simply create something even cheaper and sell it on [a] loss. Apple is selling products but Google is selling a platform, the marketing strategies are different. Apple earns on hardware sales, that’s

what they are good at: pretty design and fair performance. Just imagine if you could have a Samsung tablet with either Android or iOS. Which one would

you choose? (Yes of course [the] iPad has a better software catalog now, but we are talking about future right?!)”

—JOHNSMITH5

“I’m a huge Android fan, but the design of this tablet just looks horrible. That bezel is huge and the 7-hour battery life? It’s a little better than a laptop. I’d probably opt for the Nexus 7, but seven inches is a little small for my taste. The iPad is a good piece of hardware, but I just don’t enjoy the iOS experience. Maybe I’ll save my money for the Nexus 4. That phone looks awesome!”

—KENNYSPT



**NEXUS 4**  
**ISSUE 65,**  
**NOVEMBER 9TH, 2012**

“Well, I think I have an idea why the important performance tests and battery tests fail on Nexus 4. Quadrant’s CPU department lacks close to half the points, only 2/4 cores are used (?) quite likely. The battery test can mean a lot, either 50 percent brightness is maybe too much, considering the phone can actually turn brighter than others or (and that is my guess) the video is not hardware accelerated. That explains the observation from *The Verge* (long lasting on high usage, but same 5.5h with static video tests).”

**—GORGEOUSGEORGE**

“I will buy one when I get the notification from Google tomorrow. This will be my first Android phone and it seems to have some of the best stuff going at this time. HSPA+ might not be as fast as LTE ... but for my needs, it should suffice.

So much great stuff ... either here now, in a few

weeks or just around the proverbial ‘corner.’

I have had a new iPhone with every release — until the 5... Just finally lost interest after seeing the other cool toys.”

**—MERLIN8**

**THE TIME IS RIGHT**  
**FOR XBOX SURFACE**  
**ISSUE 65,**  
**NOVEMBER 9TH, 2012**

“AirPlay / Miracast is way more interesting when going the other way around, as in, PC / console / Blu-ray to tablet. I think the future holds the tablet as a screen terminal, which can live on

its own internals when not paired with anything else. They could sell laptops with no screen (keyboard with internals) that could simply stream its screen straight to your tablet or TV, or PC monitor. Similarly they can do the same for consoles. The Wii U is doing this slightly, except the controller is just a screen and a controller, not a tablet on top. I think Microsoft could strike gold if it made it so Windows RT tablets can act as screens for the next Xbox, yet also be a full-fledged Windows RT tablet when used alone.”

**—THELIONGADGET**

“I hope they don’t just make [a] PSP Vita rival, but a normal tablet with game optimization. The reason portable consoles are selling so poorly is because smartphones offer similar performance, but you can do all sorts of other things on them. If MS makes the Xbox Surface a dedicated gaming tablet, people will prefer regular Android tablets or iPad mini for the added versatility.”

**—KINGSIX87**



“People want high-end tablets, and games are often a driving factor, but no one wants them labeled as “gaming tablets.” Can you imagine Apple releasing a video game centric iPad? No one would buy that. People want the elegant professional looking tablet even if they just waste time with it. Microsoft is on the right track by making high-end tablets that look professional but can play games. Their downside is that pre-Windows 8, for typical consumer use-cases of web browsing and game playing Microsoft’s products have been horrible next to iOS and Android.”

—MASSIMOHEITOR

MICROSOFT SURFACE  
WITH WINDOWS RT  
ISSUE 63,  
OCTOBER 26TH, 2012

“I am a Linux user and would buy the pro version if I can install Linux on it. I really appreciate the hard work, innovation and risk that Mi-

crosoft is taking at the moment. There was a day when I felt that MS were lazy and a bit arrogant, but that has really changed. Their design is amongst, if not the best in the industry at the moment and it is good to see. The Surface is an innovative product, not be-

cause of what it does on paper, but what it does in practice. Attention to detail and high standards. It’s like writing good software, the beauty is in the detail and only technicians and designers can get that right, not business people.”

—NATITO

“Looking at the Surface, many things come to mind. At that price point why not just buy an Ultra? No touch screen but it is a PC and can do any work task as well as play Flash video, which the Surface seems to do poorly. Another note, has anyone tried typing a serious amount of work into Word on the Surface? Is it usable as a desktop replacement? If the answer is NO, then it’s just a toy and why bother. Get a \$199 Nexus and save yourself lots of money.”

—CHICAGOB0B123



# ENTER

EYES-ON

DISTRO  
11.16.12

## UNMONDAY 4.3L AIRPLAY SPEAKER

### WIRELESS SPEAKERS TAKE A NEW SHAPE

After turning heads on Kickstarter, the Unmonday 4.3L AirPlay speaker is bringing its dapper looks to the marketplace. These units house their wares in a rather uniquely shaped frame that is held together by just six screws. Simplicity aside, the speakers will keep the tunes cranked for around 10 hours before needing a recharge.

THE DAMAGE:  
\$700



# GOGO ATG-4 IN-FLIGHT WIFI



**We climbed aboard** Gogo's test jet to try its newest air-to-ground WiFi service, ATG-4. As you can imagine, newer means faster: ATG-4 is rated for max download speeds of 9.8 Mbps, up from 3.1 Mbps with the last-gen service. It also helps that video streaming services like Netflix, Hulu and HBO Go are now blocked, which should ensure that passengers don't abuse their WiFi privileges. And with this generation of its air-to-ground service, Gogo made a switch from EVDO Rev A. to Rev. B.

So how's the performance with this new setup? It's not fast, per se, but it's faster. Usable, which is a start. Page loading times dropped noticeably, from 10 to 14 seconds on ATG, to as little as four seconds on ATG-4. On ATG-4, we were able to upload a 4.1MB photo to SkyDrive in a little over four minutes; that same upload took five minutes and 15 seconds using the last-gen technology. And yet, much of this improvement doesn't have so much to do with speed but rather, sheer usability. As we said, ATG was fine — but that's when there were only nine people on the plane. In that scenario, page loads sometimes took more than 10 seconds, but they loaded. Even with a simulated flight setting, we were able to load websites in about eight seconds on ATG-4, which is still faster than on last-gen ATG in the best conditions.



**PRICE: \$14-\$40**

**AVAILABILITY: NOW  
AVAILABLE (US  
AIRWAYS, DELTA &  
VIRGIN AMERICA)**

**THE BREAKDOWN: EVEN  
WITH THE UPGRADE TO ATG-4,  
GOGO'S IN-FLIGHT WIFI STILL  
ISN'T VERY FAST, BUT IT IS  
MORE RELIABLE.**



Click on  
product  
names to  
read full  
stories





# HTC DROID DNA

**HTC has unveiled** the Droid DNA, the stateside counterpart to the Japan-only J Butterfly. Made to run on Verizon's 4G LTE network and trimmed with the carrier's signature color, the 5-incher also enters the market as the OEM's first plus-sized effort. But a larger footprint's not the only bleeding-edge tech on hand here, as the device plays host to a quad-core S4 Pro clocked at 1.5GHz and buffered by 2GB RAM, a 2,020mAh battery capable of Qi-compatible wireless charging and an 8-megapixel rear camera capable of 1080p video. We don't think we have to explain that the DNA is a large device, but we'll say it anyway: this thing is huge. Perhaps not quite as unwieldy as the Galaxy Note II, but this is not a



phone you'll be comfortably using with one hand, unless you're an NBA player.

We'll admit, the dimly lit demo station at HTC and Verizon's joint press event was probably not the best place to judge the quality of the full HD panel, but we're pretty impressed based on our first impressions. On the software front you're looking at Android 4.1 and Sense 4+. Obviously we couldn't run a full suite of benchmarks, but we did take it for a quick spin through SunSpider and Quadrant. On our favorite browser benchmark we got a pretty speedy 1,173.5ms, which holds up well against the Nexus 4 and Optimus G (both share a CPU with the DNA) which pulled in a 1,975 and 1,283 respectively. Quadrant was a little less impressive, with it only scoring a 7,131 which is significantly lower than the 7,628 the Optimus G pulled on the same test.

**PRICE: \$199 (ON-CONTRACT)**

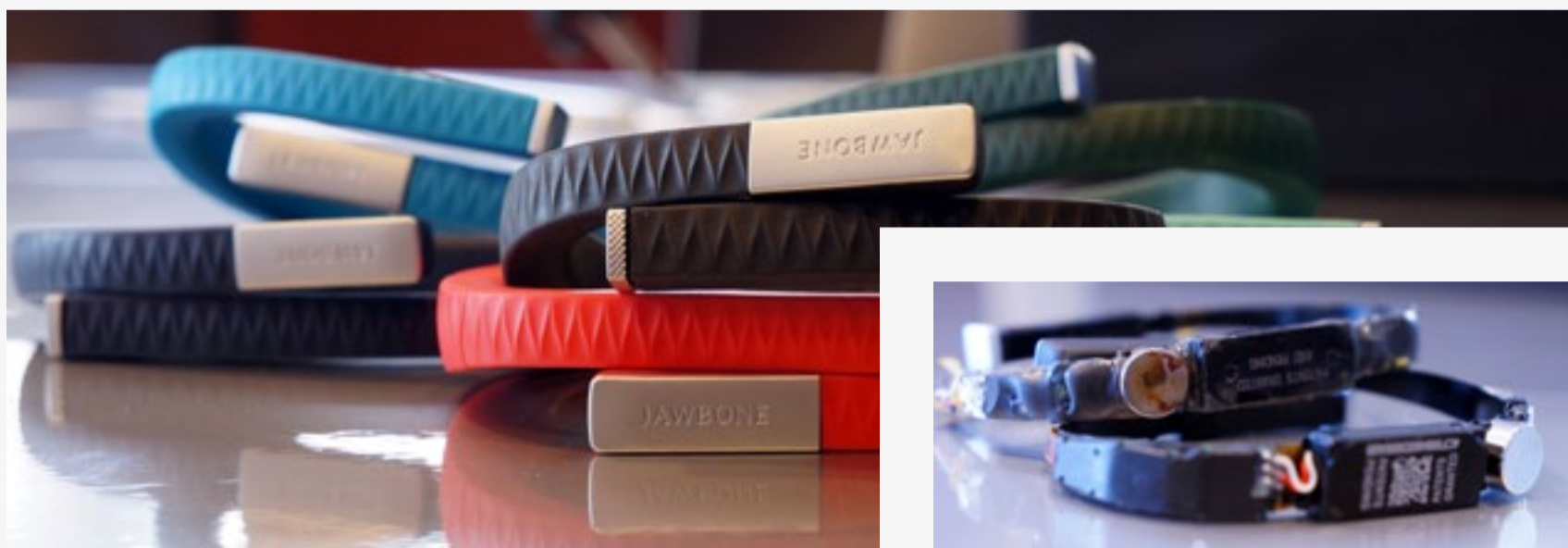
**AVAILABILITY: NOVEMBER 21ST**

**THE BREAKDOWN: HTC'S NEW 5-INCH HANDSET PACKS A 1080P PANEL INSIDE A DECEPTIVELY LIGHT, 9.73MM-THICK FRAME.**



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stories





# JAWBONE UP (2012)

**In life,** we're often told the best-learned lessons are those spurred by mistakes. In Jawbone's case, its plague-ridden Up wristband from last winter turned out be a sweeping education. So much so that the Jambox-maker now refers to the launch as an accidental "beta" program; a public exercise in wearables R&D that ended in an official apology and full refunds. Sounds extreme, but those missteps led to a ground-up reinvention for the product: the company just announced a new version of the band. Unfortunately, what

**PRICE: \$129**  
**AVAILABILITY:**  
**NOW AVAILABLE**  
**THE**  
**BREAKDOWN:**  
**VERSION 2.0 OF**  
**THE INFAMOUS**  
**WEARABLE**  
**LOOKS TO**  
**RIGHT LAST**  
**YEAR'S WRONGS**  
**ALONGSIDE A**  
**RETOOLED iOS**  
**APPLICATION.**

hasn't changed is how it syncs and charges — all of which is still handled by the 3.5mm jack. We inquired about a Bluetooth-enabled model — a feature on our wishlist from last year — but were told that for the sake of battery life and user experience, the company's opted to stay the course.

A quick glance at Up's refreshed companion app is evidence enough of Jawbone's determination to right its past wrongs — the interface is visually appealing, moves fluidly and is incredibly easy to navigate. Having received a much needed makeover from its comparatively barebones earlier incarnation, the tracking application's now laid out with an intuitive simplicity that's on par with its host hardware. It's clear the company retains an enthusiasm for the lifestyle-tracking wearables space; a category it intends to nail nigh perfectly this time at bat. What remains to be seen is whether or not disillusioned customers are willing to forgive, forget and come back for round two. **D**



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read full  
stories



# IEEE Spectrum

A magazine called *IEEE Spectrum* published by the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (they of the IEEE in the title) may not sound like the most accessible of reads, but those who'd dismiss it at first glance would be missing out on some of the most informative and interesting technology writing around. And, yes, it is perfectly accessible for non-engineers. Published monthly (along with daily news on its website), the magazine covers the gamut of technology issues, from space to consumer electronics — and, as we've featured on these pages before, it often does so with some great long-form reporting. The most recent issue featured articles on how RCA lost the LCD race despite owning many key early patents, how live sports events are proving to be the hardest to produce in 3D and how semiautonomous cars could increase both safety and fuel efficiency. Those and articles from past issues are free to read online, but subscriptions run just \$20 a year, or \$30 for a combined print / digital subscription.



Click on  
headlines  
to read full  
stories

## Almost Being There: Why the Future of Space Exploration Is Not What You Think

by Adam Mann

**Wired Science**

Two recurring themes generally crop up when talking about the future of space exploration: whether it will be publicly or privately funded, and whether it will involve humans or robots. *Wired's* Adam Mann tackles one aspect of the latter here, examining ways humans and robots could work together in the future with the aid of telepresence systems.

## Emotional Experience Through a Gameplay World

by Michael Abbott

**Brainy Gamer**

You don't have to look far for criticism of much of today's writing about video games, but Michael Abbott recently offered up a more unique take than most on his *Brainy Gamer* blog, suggesting that the problem isn't just lazy or formulaic reviews, but a lack of a sufficient vocabulary needed to discuss games in the way we're able to critique books, movies or music.

## The Secret History of the Aeron Chair

by Cliff Kuang

**Slate**

It may not be a piece of consumer electronics, but there are few objects in the office environment more associated with the technology industry than Herman Miller's Aeron chair. As Cliff Kuang explains in this piece for *Slate*, however, it had some decidedly different beginnings, having been originally designed with the needs of the elderly in mind.

## In the Developing World, RIM Makes its Last Stand

by Iain Marlow

**The Globe and Mail**

RIM may have descended from its once dominant position in the North American smartphone market at a precipitous rate, but there are still places where it remains well ahead of the competition — like Nigeria, where *The Globe and Mail's* Iain Marlow recently traveled to see how the company is trying to prevent what's happened elsewhere.



DISTRO

# HOLIDAY

# GIFT GUIDE

2012



**G**adget nerds are notoriously picky and understandably opinionated about the devices they adopt, which can make shopping for them a feat of gargantuan proportions. This holiday season, don't waste your time digging through the annals of the internet or pressing your luck with a big-box mailer. Just hop into our gift guide, and let us do the dirty work.

*Photographs by Will Lipman*





**Accessories**

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**Portable Audio  
& Docks**

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**Bags & Cases**

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**Digital Cameras,  
Camcorders  
& Action Cams**

---

**Tablets**

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**E-Readers**

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**Laptops &  
Ultraportables**

---

**Fun Stuff**

---

**Gaming**

---

**HDTV &  
Home Theater**

---

**Smartphones**



# Accessories

HOLIDAY  
GIFT GUIDE  
= 2012 =



**S**URE, ULTRABOOKS AND WINDOWS 8 TABLETS are flashy gift options, but it's extras like the ones found here that really make 'em sing. Whether it's a desktop or portable storage solution, a smart thermostat or a secondary camera for those more experimental shots, we've got you covered. —*Billy Steele*



*Holiday Gift Guide*

**2012**

**On the Cheap**

# ACCESSORIES

*You Might Also Like*

## LOGITECH TOUCH MOUSE T620

What better way to welcome Windows 8 to your holiday party than with a touch mouse that supports the new operating system's gesture controls? Logitech's T620 does just that. The peripheral implements proprietary 2.4GHz wireless tech (and the transceiver will need to occupy one of your Ultrabook's USB ports).

**BUY**

**\$50**



**BUY**

**\$29**

## APPLE LIGHTNING ADAPTER

If you're lucky enough to receive one of Apple's recently unveiled handhelds or slates, you'll likely need some extra help if you want to use your current speaker dock. This little fella allows all of those newfangled gadgets to connect to 30-pin-wielding chargers and accessories, and minimizes a few headaches in the process.

## TWELVE SOUTH BOOKARC

If you're in need of a cozy resting spot for that new MacBook Pro or Air, Twelve South has you covered. The company's BookArc stands sport the same metal stylings as the tech they're made to cradle. The heavy-gauge steel construction nestles a soft insert to keep scratches at bay while your machine is tucked within. In an effort to further tidy up that workspace, the BookArc features a cable management system that ensures the display, headphone and power cords stay put.

**KEY SPECS:** MacBook Pro and MacBook Air models, steel construction, built-in cable management, cushioned insert for secure fit.

**BUY**

**\$40+**



*Holiday Gift Guide*

2012

Mid-Range

# ACCESSORIES

## LACIE RUGGED USB 3.0 THUNDERBOLT



**BUY**

\$200+

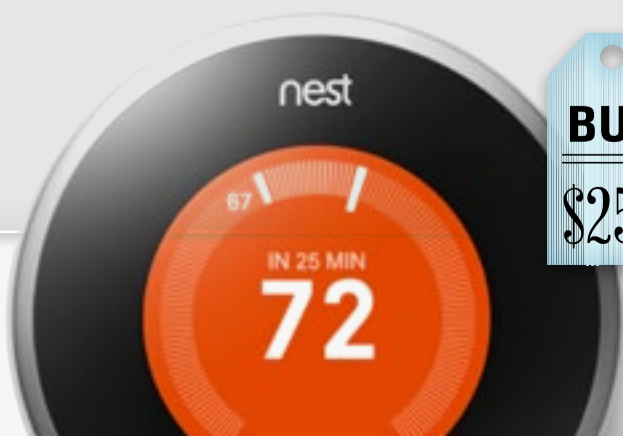
A little added protection for that portable HDD you'll be lugging around never hurt anyone. Luckily, the folks at LaCie are quite familiar with the heavy-duty storage devices. Its latest, the Rugged USB 3.0 Thunderbolt Series, packs quite a punch in its familiar, orange-lined digs. As the moniker suggests, the drives offer both USB 3.0 and Thunderbolt connections, and the SSD version transfers at speeds of up to 385 MB/s while the HDD offering clocks in at 110 MB/s. You won't need to pack a power supply for these bad boys, either.

**KEY SPECS:** USB 3.0 and Thunderbolt connectivity, up to 1TB capacity, SSD and HDD models, Mac and Windows compatibility, sturdy frame.

*You Might Also Like*

## NEST LEARNING THERMOSTAT

The original Nest Learning Thermostat arrived on the scene about a year ago, but a new version of the household gadget recently broke from cover, offering a slimmer design and support for about 95 percent of heating and cooling systems. New features like System Match and Auto-Away pad the capabilities of the dapper, in-home temperature gauge.



**BUY**

\$250

## CINETICS MINISKATES VIDEO DOLLY

If the funds required to snag the CineSkates are too much to commit to your best mate's video habits, perhaps a smaller version will do the trick. The miniSkates video dolly is a rolling mount that secures both smartphones and cameras of up to 1.5 pounds. The complete set includes a GorillaPod that contorts to capture the perfect angle.



**BUY**

\$130



*Holiday Gift Guide*

2012

High-End

# ACCESSORIES



## LYTRO CAMERA

When it first arrived on the scene, we were quite impressed by the Lytro camera's after-shot refocusing and intuitive UI. Now, the handsome kit has added manual ISO and shutter controls to pilot the f/2.0 8x optical zoom lens alongside a host of accessories for keeping the unit safe in your backpack. You'll be able to snap 350 holiday photos with the 8GB model and 750 images of that ski trip with the 16GB model, and the entire lot plays nice with Windows, too.

**KEY SPECS:** Post-shot focus, manual ISO / shutter controls, 8GB or 16GB of storage, f/2.0 8x optical zoom lens, simple UI.



**BUY**

\$399+

*You Might Also Like*

**BUY**  
\$850



## WESTERN DIGITAL MY BOOK VELOCIRAPTOR DUO

If that special someone needs a safe depository for all those high-res images, HD videos and 3D renders, look no further. The My Book VelociRaptor Duo wields two 1TB 10,000RPM drives capable of SSD-esque speeds of 400 MB/s.



**BUY**

\$1,295

## APOGEE QUARTET

Looking to get super serious about that recording habit? Add this USB audio interface to your wish list. The command center packs four channels of analog / digital conversion, six balanced outputs, a headphone jack, monitor controls, MIDI I/O, full-color displays and QuickTouch pads for sorting through all those connections.



# Portable Audio and Docks

HOLIDAY  
GIFT GUIDE  
= 2012 =



**I**F YOU PLAN ON PICKING UP SMARTPHONES, TABLETS and computers for your loved ones this holiday season, it's safe to bet most of them won't produce decent audio quality on their own. So we're here to highlight the year's best gear for getting the most out of the sounds of the season.  
— Joe Pollicino & Zach Honig



# PORTABLE AUDIO

## V-MODA M-100

Created with heavy input from the audio-philosophers at *Head-Fi*, the M-100s are a cross between V-Moda's M-80 on-ears and LP2 DJ headphones. The result is a striking set of portable, fashion-focused cans with HiFi DNA. Military-grade construction with swappable cabling, replaceable leather earpads, customizable and swappable earcup plates and folding earcups help ensure that these over-ear (yet still low-profile) headphones will also be ready for your abusive commutes. The M-100s won't be available until later this holiday season, but you can get your pre-order filled out in the meantime.

**KEY SPECS:** Cliqfold earcup hinges, highly durable MIL-STD-810G metal construction, carrying case, dual cable inputs, replaceable and customizable earcup plates, Kevlar-wrapped cable with a one-button remote / mic, memory foam earpads, three base color options.



**BUY**  
\$310

*You Might Also Like*

### KLIPSCH IMAGE S4i SERIES II

It's been years since Klipsch introduced its standard-setting S4 lineup of in-ear headphones, and we still think they are among the best for about a Benjamin. The latest iteration of the intra-aurals features flat cabling and updated remotes, but the rich sound and comfortable fit are the same as ever.



**BUY**  
\$99

### BOWERS & WILKINS P3

Downsized from B&W's leather-wrapped P5 headphones, the P3s are a bite-sized chunk of opulence for your ears. These on-ear cans feature folding earcups and memory foam padding. Best of all, the iOS-remote / mic-loaded cabling and earpads are replaceable.



**BUY**  
\$200



*Holiday Gift Guide*

**2012**

**Wireless  
Headphones**

# PORTABLE AUDIO



## PARROT ZIK BY STARCK

You really can't go wrong with the Parrot Zik by Starck Bluetooth headphones as a gift for an audio-loving gadget geek. Not only are the headphones dressed to the nines thanks to Philippe Starck's synthetic leather-and-metal design, but they also offer everything from a touch control on the right earcup to NFC support and active noise cancellation. Check out the beefy spec list, and you'll see why we'd recommend these premium cans, but be sure to pick up an extra \$30 battery, as you'll only average six hours per charge with wireless and ANC functionality enabled.

**KEY SPECS:** NFC, active noise cancellation, touch-activated gesture control, jawbone sensor, dedicated speech microphone, replaceable Li-ion battery, Parrot Audio Suite app Bluetooth 2.1, pressure-sensitive head detection.



**BUY**  
**\$400**

*You Might Also Like*

## HARMAN KARDON BT

If you've wished Bowers & Wilkins would make wireless versions of its headphones, check these out. A dapper metal-and-leather, retro-inspired design melds with modern Bluetooth wireless streaming and iOS-compatible on-ear controls for a premium mobile listening experience.

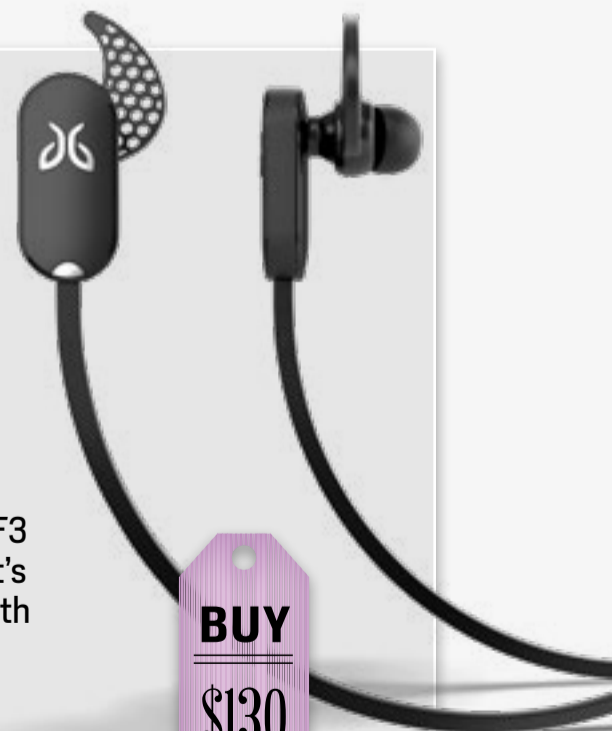
**BUY**  
**\$250**



## JAYBIRD FREEDOM SPRINT

Jaybird knows what's up when it comes to fitness-focused audio gear. Its Freedom Sprint offers performance similar to its JF3 in-ears, all in a package that's 40 percent smaller. Bluetooth 2.1 + EDR streaming and secure-fitting earbuds will help ensure you won't get tangled during your next run.

**BUY**  
**\$130**



*Holiday Gift Guide*

**2012**

**Portable  
Wireless**

# PORTABLE AUDIO



**BUY**  
\$200

## BEATS BY DR. DRE PILL

Dr. Dre thinks it's time for a new prescription for enhancing your mobile audio needs in a diminutive speaker. With a quartet of 1-inch drivers, this medication-inspired mini-rig offers sound that's miles ahead of other portable Bluetooth speakers at its price point, supporting the likes of Apt-X and AAC codecs. An internal battery will let you jam for around seven hours, while NFC makes pairing a cinch.

**KEY SPECS:** Tiny size, four 1-inch drivers, NFC, on-board microphone, Apt-X and AAC support, Bluetooth 2.1, 3.5mm input and output jacks, micro-USB charging and probably some sort of street cred.



*You Might Also Like*

**BUY**  
\$100

### LOGITECH UE MOBILE BOOMBOX

The UE mobile weighs in at just 10.51 ounces, yet it still nets around 10 hours of battery life. Naturally, the unit charges via micro-USB, and a 3.5mm input is on board so you can forgo wireless streaming. It also comes in a variety of colors to fit your mood.



**BUY**  
\$449

### LIBRATONE ZIPP

The Libratone Zipp is pretty huge for a portable speaker, but it's packing a major trick up its sleeve: AirPlay Direct. Adding a bit of Scandinavian style, the wool grille can be zipped off and swapped with two additional colors (included). The internal battery nets eight hours of playback.



# DOCKS

## SOUNDFREAQ SOUND RISE

The Sound Rise features a 30-pin connector front and center, yes, but an included cover serves to hide away the plug when using incompatible devices, while also providing a platform for your smartphone or MP3 player to rest. A USB port on the back lets you power your gadget as you stream audio over Bluetooth or pump it through the 3.5mm headphone jack. There's also an FM radio built in, should you have a hankering to pass the time listening to advertisements for pest control services and used car dealerships.

**KEY SPECS:** 13-watt output, 30-pin dock connector, Bluetooth, USB power port.



**BUY**  
\$100

*You Might Also Like*



**BUY**  
\$65

### iHOME iA17

iHome may not be known as a premium manufacturer, but if you're on a budget it's time to keep expectations in check. The iA17's banner feature is its color-changing shell, making this basic rig a fun fit for fashionable tweens. And, with iPod or FM radio wake-up options, it'll keep them on schedule, too.

## BERLIN BOOMBOX

The Berlin Boombox first caught our eye when it appeared as a Kickstarter project, and now this cardboard speaker rig is finally ready to ship. Roughly 85 bucks (plus shipping) buys you dual 5-watt speakers, a stereo amp and DIY assembly. It's a fun project for sure, and if it sounds great, consider that a bonus.



**BUY**  
\$85



# DOCKS

## JBL PLAYUP

Get the IOU pad ready — this fantastic wireless speaker has a TBD ship date, though it's set to hit before the year is through. Designed alongside Nokia's new Lumia series, this colorful tub of sweet sound uses NFC and Bluetooth to pair with a phone without the need for screen taps or passcodes. While Nokia is pushing it as a Windows Phone accessory, it'll work just fine with recent handsets from most manufacturers, and it packs a standard 3.5mm input for pulling tunes from any gadget with a headphone jack. It looks great and offers excellent sound, so even though it isn't quite ready to ship, this sub-\$200 speaker should be ready to rock soon.

**KEY SPECS:** Rechargeable battery, 3-watt output, Bluetooth, NFC, 3.5mm input.



*You Might Also Like*



**BUY**  
\$200

## TDK WIRELESS WEATHERPROOF SPEAKER

Perhaps you're looking for a slightly more premium experience, with a smaller footprint and a rechargeable battery to boot. The A33 offers a weatherproof construction, but you wouldn't know it at first glance. Your Bluetooth device sends over tracks, while a built-in mic lets the rig double as a speakerphone when you need to put the fun on hold.



**BUY**  
\$122

## GRACE DIGITAL ECO TERRA

The warm summer sun may have long since set on 2012's beach season, but it won't hurt to keep next year in mind. Eco Terra can survive both surf and sand while keeping your smartphone safe as well. Tunes come in through a 3.5mm jack, and four C batts will keep you groovin' for a full day and then some.



*Holiday Gift Guide*

**2012**

**Money's  
No Object**

# DOCKS

## BOWERS & WILKINS A7

Want the best of the best? Well, you may need to take out a second mortgage. If you're willing to settle for the *next* best thing, Bowers & Wilkins has your back. The brand-new A7 flagship features AirPlay for wireless streaming from Apple devices with both 802.11g and Ethernet connectivity, which you'll configure using the setup app on your iPhone or iPad. The attractive rig can be tucked away, but you'll probably prefer a more prominent presentation — it'll look great on a fireplace mantel, office desk or kitchen counter, and thanks to AirPlay support, you can add it to all three for simultaneous streaming throughout your house.

**KEY SPECS:** 150-watt output, WiFi and AirPlay support, 24-bit DACs, setup app.



**BUY**

**\$799**

*You Might Also Like*



**BUY**

**\$299**

## BOSE SOUNDLINK II

This premium brand's latest tune machine offers completely wireless operation, with Bluetooth streaming from laptops, tablets and smartphones, and a rechargeable battery that nets eight hours of playback. You can customize it to your liking with folding covers in red, blue, purple, burgundy, black and tan.

## SAMSUNG DA-E750

Not only does Samsung's vacuum tube-powered dock offer excellent sound, but it also looks fantastic. This modern take on classic design has premium written all over it — especially on the price tag. Stream music wirelessly using Bluetooth, AllShare or AirPlay, or take advantage of the hidden dock that tucks out of view when not in use.



**BUY**

**\$628**



# Bags and Cases

HOLIDAY  
GIFT GUIDE  
= 2012 =



**G**IFT GIVING IS ALL ABOUT WHAT'S UNDER THAT wrapping paper, but when the holidays are over those shiny new gadgets won't protect themselves from wear and tear. Whether you're looking for a bag to tote a notebook PC or a durable case to shield your smartphone, these selections are equal parts stylish and functional. — *Sarah Silbert*



# BAGS AND CASES

**BUY****\$79.95**

## THULE ENROUTE STRUT DAYPACK

Thule rucksacks have a special place in our hearts, as they hold up through countless trade shows and can accommodate an onslaught of gadgets. This guy is no different, offering a padded laptop sleeve for up to a 15-inch machine along with a pocket for a 10.1-inch tablet. There's also a crush-proof SafeZone compartment for fragile gear, an organization panel for smaller gadgets and gizmos, an external stash pocket and a side pouch for a water bottle.

**KEY SPECS:** 19-liter capacity, crush-proof SafeZone compartment, top-load laptop sleeve, organization panel.

### *You Might Also Like*

**BUY****\$74.80**

## CASE LOGIC SLRC-206 SLR CAMERA AND 15.4-INCH LAPTOP BACKPACK

Camera-toting types will appreciate this pack's roomy design, which fits an SLR body with an attached zoom lens, along with up to a 16-inch laptop. Removable shelves provide additional lens storage, and waterproof EVA means the bag is ready for all-weather shoots.

**BUY****\$175**

## CRUMPLER NHILL HEIST

There are only so many variations on the backpack, but Crumpler's take is one of the more striking — and, yes, costly. The main zippered compartment includes a padded sleeve with room for up to a 17-inch laptop, and four internal side pockets are on hand for stowing other essentials.



# BAGS AND CASES

## TIMBUK2 CONTROL LAPTOP CASE

The Control is part messenger, part briefcase, with handles and a removable shoulder strap that let you switch between casual and business modes. The external laptop compartment unzips to lie flat for going through airport security, and internal organization includes a dedicated slot for a tablet or e-reader and a pocket for power bricks and cords. The textured oxford nylon exterior — available in black, blue, gunmetal or gray — is quite tasteful, to boot.

**KEY SPECS:** TSA-compliant external laptop compartment, separate pockets for laptop and tablet, waterproof TPU flap, removable shoulder strap.

**BUY****\$89***You Might Also Like***BUY****\$142.50**

### BOOQ BOA NERVE BAG

The design is simple enough to work for executives and students alike, and there's enough room inside for a 17-inch laptop, a tablet, a phone and then some.

**BUY****\$32.54**

### BELKIN 15-INCH MESSENGER

If the techie on your list travels light, Belkin's tastefully understated messenger is a great option. It fits a 15-inch notebook (with plenty of padding to keep it safe) and includes a split compartment along with three external pockets.



# BAGS AND CASES

## OTTERBOX COMMUTER SERIES

The Commuter line bridges the iOS / Android divide, with cases for the iPhone as well as the HTC One X and the Samsung Galaxy S III, among other devices. The silicone mid-layer and polycarbonate shell protect handsets from scratches and bumps without adding too much bulk.

**KEY SPECS:** Two-layer protection to shield against drops and bumps, self-adhesive screen protector, port covers.

**BUY****\$35+**

### *You Might Also Like*

#### SAMSUNG FLIP COVER

Owners of the Note (I and II) and the Galaxy S III get access to one of the sweetest case designs out there. The Flip Cover replaces a phone's battery cover and provides protection for the device's display when it's not in use.

**BUY****\$21****BUY****\$35**

#### MARWARE ECOVUE KINDLE COVER

E-readers and commuting are a match made in heaven, so why not gift a case that can stow some cash, a MetroCard and other on-the-go essentials? We especially dig the strap for one-handed reading.



# *Digital Cameras, Camcorders and Action Cams*

HOLIDAY  
GIFT GUIDE  
= 2012 =



**W**HILE SMARTPHONE SHOOTERS ARE BECOMING more adept at capturing stills and even HD video, that hasn't stopped advances in dedicated devices. For those of you looking for something a bit more full-featured to slap a bow on this holiday season, here are our picks for the year's best digital cameras, camcorders and action cams. — *Zach Honig*



# DIGITAL CAMERAS

*You Might Also Like*

## SAMSUNG MV900F

Samsung's MultiView entrant from 2011 didn't offer fantastic image quality or even a decent display, but it scored points for functionality, thanks to a flip-up self-portrait display. Fortunately, this year's model adds a 16.3-megapixel BSI CMOS sensor and 3.3-inch WVGA AMOLED panel, both of which should make this clever point-and-shoot a winner.



**BUY**

**\$299**

## CANON POWERSHOT SX160 IS

This brand-new 16-megapixel PowerShot is a bit too large to tuck away in a pocket, but reviewers claim it offers excellent image quality and functionality, making this a solid step-up pick for someone not quite ready to move to mirrorless. It also takes AA batteries, so you can refuel easily abroad.



**BUY**

**\$169**



**BUY**

**\$648**

## SONY CYBER-SHOT RX100

We have nothing but nice things to say about the RX100. Sony has outdone itself with this 1-inch-sensor compact, offering stellar image quality, an awesome build and the best focusing performance we've seen in a point-and-shoot, bar none. It's also one of the most expensive pocketable cameras on the market, but after using one for several weeks, we wouldn't hesitate to endorse this model as an excellent value. The Carl Zeiss Vario-Sonnar T\* lens, while excellent, isn't removable, but performance otherwise rivals the Olympus E-M5 — our current focusing champ. Deep-pocketed gift givers may also want to consider Sony's RX1, which includes a full-frame sensor, and a sky-high \$2,800 price tag.

**KEY SPECS:** 20.2-megapixel 1-inch Exmor CMOS sensor, 3.6x optical zoom, f/1.8-4.9 lens, 1080/60p video.



*Holiday Gift Guide*

2012

Mirrorless

# DIGITAL CAMERAS

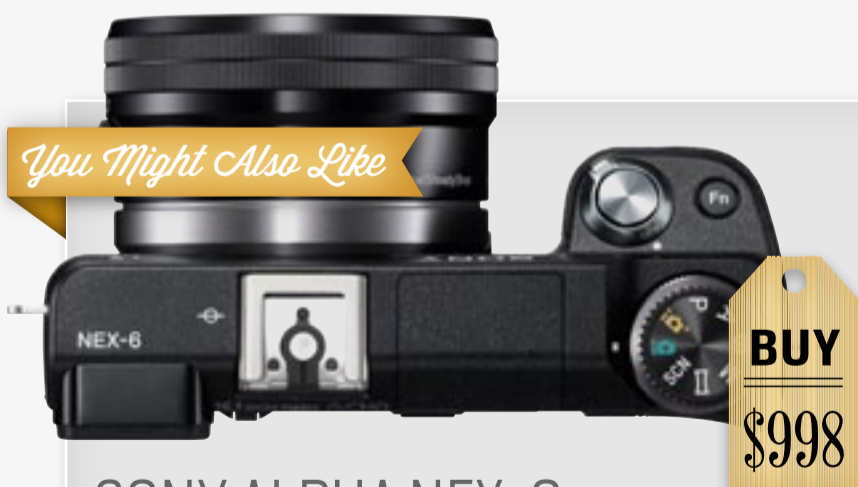


## OLYMPUS PEN E-PM2

We fell in love with the E-M5's insane focusing performance, but the camera's \$1,100 kit price placed it out of reach for many consumers. Now, that same 16-megapixel CMOS sensor has made its way to a pair of PEN mod-

els, the E-PL5 and E-PM2, which both deliver super-fast focus, sensor-shift IS and nearly identical specs. You'll need to splurge for that first OM-D to get the company's nifty five-axis stabilization, but a three-axis variant still gets the job done here. Both of Olympus' new Micro Four Thirds ILCs pack a serious punch, with form-factor marking the primary difference. Both touch-enabled LCDs offer the same 460k-dot resolution, but it's the E-PM2's more compact design and lower price that make it our top mirrorless pick.

**KEY SPECS:** 16-megapixel Live MOS sensor, 14-42mm f/3.5-5.6 kit lens, 25,600 top ISO, 8 fps stills, 1080/60i video.



## SONY ALPHA NEX-6

The NEX-6 combines the best features of Sony's recent APS-C compacts, with a 16.1-megapixel CMOS sensor, a fantastic LCD, a built-in OLED EVF, 1080/60p video, 10 fps stills, a top sensitivity of ISO 25,600 and improved autofocus. In other words, it's got it all, but a \$1,000 price tag may be too much to swallow.

## PANASONIC LUMIX DMC-GX1

The GX1 may not be the hottest Micro Four Thirds shooter from Panasonic this year, but it's a very solid entrant nonetheless, and one of our favorite mirrorless ILCs in this price range. The 16-megapixel CMOS sensor captures excellent images, and plenty of dedicated controls make it a great fit for advanced users. And we love the price.



# DIGITAL CAMERAS

## SONY ALPHA A99

Sony's new full-frame flagship is top-of-the-line in every way, except when it comes to price. A \$2,800 sticker undercuts Canon's \$3,500 5D Mark III and Nikon's \$3,000 D800, and the camera's compact footprint and lighter weight make it feel more akin to the two, less-capable models listed here. This more comfortable design is compliments of Sony's Translucent Mirror technology, which also enables faster autofocus when snapping 1080p HD video or continuous stills at up to 10 frames-per-second. While it's still not cheap, we feel that a full-frame sensor is the key component that should make you consider a full-size DSLR — for most consumers, the mirrorless models above will absolutely suffice, saving your wallet, and your neck, in the process.

**KEY SPECS:** Full-frame 24-megapixel sensor, 25,600 top ISO, 10 fps stills, 1080/60p video with uncompressed output.



*You Might Also Like*



**BUY**

**\$2,099**

## CANON EOS 6D

Canon and Nikon had full-frame DSLRs on offer at Photokina, with identical pricing and similar feature sets. Both are excellent, lightweight options, with Canon's 6D offering a 20.2-megapixel sensor, sensitivity through ISO 102,400, 1080p video and a design that's smaller than the APS-C 7D. Current Canon shooters will want to look closely here.



**BUY**

**\$2,097**

## NIKON D600

Nikon's flavor boosts the megapixels from 20.2 to 24.3, but its sensitivity tops out at 25,600 (Hi-2). There's also 5.5 fps continuous stills shooting (compared to 4.5 on the Canon 6D), 1080p video and a similarly compact form-factor. Both models are very solid options overall, so if you've already invested in Nikon glass, you'll probably want the D600.



# CAMCORDERS AND ACTION CAMS

*You Might Also Like*



**BUY**

**\$392**

## CONTOUR+2

This helmet-mounted cam is a bit larger and pricier than the competition, but it does offer 1080p video and a line input for piping in external sound sources. The new Contour+2 adds full smartphone integration, connecting to your handset over Bluetooth to provide a remote viewfinder and controls. We put this compact shooter through its paces and loved the results.



**BUY**

**\$198**

## SONY ACTION CAM

This is a new category for Sony, but if its other cameras are any indication, it's up to the task. The Action Cam packs a 16-megapixel Exmor R sensor, SteadyShot IS, WiFi support, 1080/30p video and a speedy 720p option that snags 120 frames-per-second. There are plenty of accessories on offer, including a variety of mounts and an underwater housing that all come in the box.

## GOPRO HERO3

GoPro's Heroes may not be much to look at, but their versatility speaks for itself, earning the trust of surfers, drivers and cyclists looking to capture killer footage without compromising speed or safety. The Hero3 made its debut last month, and it's just beginning to arrive in stores. There are three flavors to choose from — the Black (\$400) model captures 4K video (limited to 15 fps) and 1080p clips at up to 60 frames-per-second, while Silver (\$300) and White (\$200) shoot 1080p at 30 fps, though the Silver model can grab higher-res stills.

**KEY SPECS:** Up to 4k 15 fps or 1080/60p video, up to 12-megapixel stills, f/2.8 fixed wide-angle lens, WiFi.



**BUY**

**\$200-400**



*Holiday Gift Guide*

**2012**

**Consumer  
Camcorders**

# CAMCORDERS AND ACTION CAMS



with Canon's VIXIA HF M500. Image stabilization's critical, and there are four options here. You can expect excellent audio capture from the built-in mic — there's also an input for adding your own source and a headphone jack that'll make monitoring a breeze. Video is captured directly to SD or SDXC cards with support for up to 64GB, and the camera offers AVCHD for higher bit-rate clips or MP4 for easier editing and direct web uploads. It's not the cheapest camcorder out, but it's a solid option.

**KEY SPECS:** 1/3-inch CMOS sensor, 1080/30p video, 3-inch touchscreen.

## CANON VIXIA HF M500

If you're very serious about your home movies or need to do some video reporting on a budget, you can't go wrong



*You Might Also Like*

## SONY HANDYCAM HDR-CX760V

If you can afford it, the Sony CX760V will surely earn its keep, especially for videographers with shaky hands. This full-featured camcorder packs Balanced Optical SteadyShot IS — the entire lens module moves to compensate for shake or motion, yielding surprisingly stable footage at wide angles and telephoto positions alike.



## PANASONIC HC-V700

Looking to boost your sensor size and focal length while sticking to a reasonable budget? The Panasonic HC-V700 features a 21x optical zoom lens, a 1/2.33-inch sensor and 1080/60p video capture, with 5.8-megapixel stills and standard image stabilization features, too.



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2012

Professional

# CAMCORDERS AND ACTION CAMS



SONY  
NEX-  
VG900

Sony's NEX camcorders have earned some credibility amongst serious shooters, and the VG900 steps up with a full-frame sensor. It's the same chip that you'll find in the Alpha A99, so you can expect killer stills as well.

BUY

\$3,298

Expect 1080p video at 24 or 60 frames-per-second and 24.3-megapixel still shots, with support for 14-bit RAW captures. There's a top sensitivity of ISO 32,000, along with support for uncompressed HD output through the HDMI port. In terms of audio, it has a built-in 5.1-channel mic, and an optional XLR input accessory, just in case you plan to add an even higher-quality source. As you shoot, you can monitor video footage through the XGA-resolution OLED electronic viewfinder or the 270-degree swivel LCD.

**KEY SPECS:** Full-frame 24.3-megapixel CMOS sensor, 1080/60p video, 5.1-channel mic, XGA EVF.

*You Might Also Like*

## CANON CINEMA EOS C100

This time last year, Canon grabbed our attention by announcing its entry into the motion picture industry with the \$16,000 EOS C300. Now the camera maker is setting its sights on slightly lighter wallets, with the 1080p-capable C100. This new model may not shoot 4K, but it does offer XLR inputs, SD card support and autofocus.



BUY

\$6,499

## JVC GY-HM650 PROHD

We love all-in-one solutions, and so does JVC, it seems. This capable compact has photojournalists in mind with a trio of CMOS sensors and WiFi connectivity with FTP support, enabling instant transfers from the field. It's not scheduled to ship until December 31st, so an IOU will have to do.



BUY

\$5,695



# Tablets

HOLIDAY  
GIFT GUIDE  
= 2012 =



**T**HERE'S SOMETHING EXTRA SPECIAL ABOUT receiving tablets. Perhaps it's their sleek and portable designs, or maybe it's because they're best for watching movies and playing games rather than pounding out important memos on a deadline. Their rep as entertainment devices is already changing, though: we've seen slates with pen input and bundled keyboard docks burst onto the market this year, and Windows 8 is only boosting that corporate-friendly image. Wherever you fall on the work / play spectrum, we've got some great slate choices for you. — *Sarah Silbert*



# TABLETS



## APPLE iPad MINI

Following years of rumors, the mini is finally here. And does it live up to the enormous hype? Yes — and it manages to surprise in some ways, too, with a unique anodized aluminum backing, impressive battery life and performance that trounces earlier-generation iPads. The \$329 price is a notch higher than the competition, but you get what you pay for. In this case, that's superior build quality and access to the tablet-friendly App Store.

**KEY SPECS:** 7.9-inch (1,024 x 768) display, dual-core A5 processor, 16GB of internal memory, 512MB of RAM, weighs 0.68 pound, rated for up to 10 hours of battery life.



**BUY**

**\$329**

*You Might Also Like*



**BUY**

**\$399**

## GOOGLE NEXUS 10

The big brother to the Nexus 7 impresses with a stunning 2,560 x 1,600 display, great gaming chops and strong audio quality. The downside is middling battery life: we're talking about seven and a half hours when the competition delivers 10-plus.



**BUY**

**\$230**

## ACER ICONIA TAB A110

Looking for a slate that offers Jelly Bean and a lightweight design on a budget? The 7-inch A110 delivers, and it runs a 1.2GHz Tegra 3 processor, to boot.



# TABLETS



## APPLE iPad 4

The mini may be stealing some of the new 9.7-inch iPad's thunder, but the smaller slate can't hold a candle to this device's super-fast A6X chip performance and stellar 2,048 x 1,536

display. One caveat, the new Lightning connector on this fourth-gen iPad will be incompatible with older docks and accessories. If you have the money to burn, though, this is one worthy step up.

**KEY SPECS:** 9.7-inch (2,048 x 1,536) IPS display, dual-core A6X processor, 1GB of RAM, 16GB internal storage, rated for up to 10 hours of battery life, weighs 1.44 pounds.



**BUY**  
**\$499**

### *You Might Also Like*



**BUY**  
**\$499**

## SAMSUNG GALAXY NOTE 10.1

Famous for its S Pen, the Note 10.1 is both a costly sketchpad and a capable Android tablet. Its plastic design isn't the most premium, and the price tag should be a good \$100 lower, but features like pen input and multi-screen view are nifty and useful.

## DELL XPS 10

The XPS 10 is one of several productivity-minded Windows RT slates available, targeting the business set with security features and VPM support. You can up the ante with the optional keyboard dock, which adds two USB ports and HDMI along with longer battery life.



**BUY**  
**\$500**

*Holiday Gift Guide*

**2012**

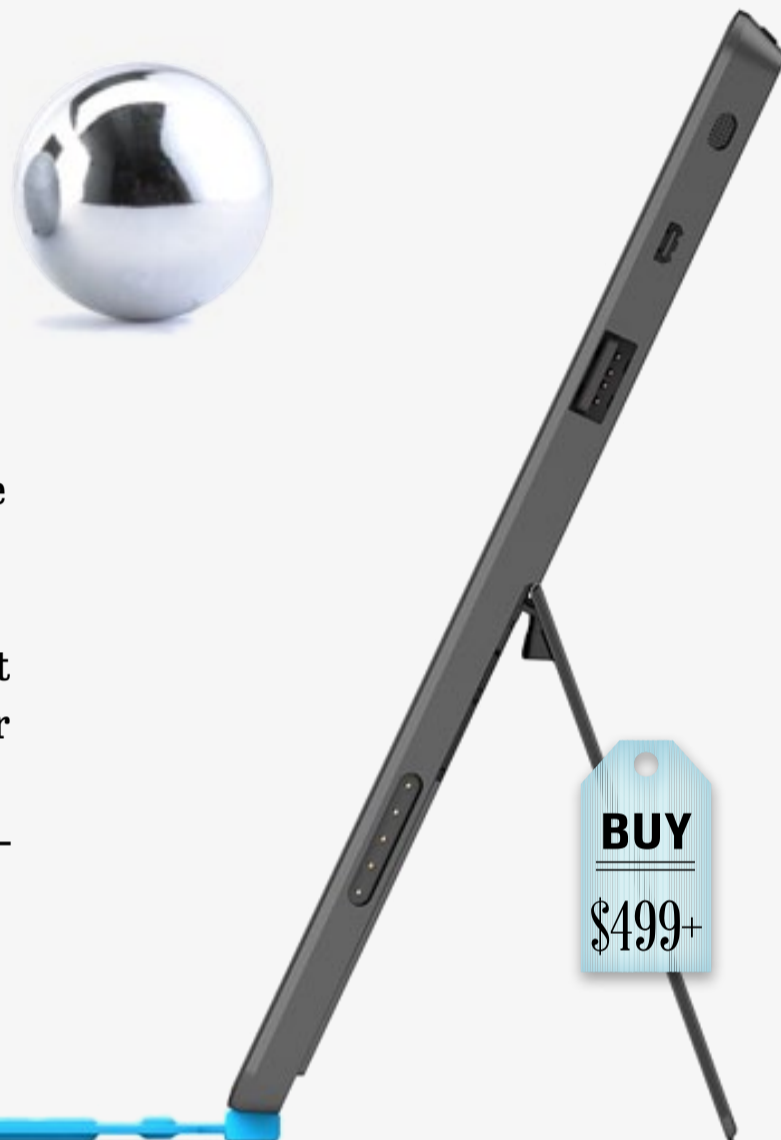
**Money's  
No Object**

# TABLETS

## MICROSOFT SURFACE WITH WINDOWS RT

Redmond's slate boasts a business-friendly pedigree, with the sold-separately (but mandatory, as far as we're concerned) Touch Cover providing the productivity chops with a comfortable set of keys. The 10.6-inch slate is also impeccably built, and the cool matte surface feels great in the hand. That said, those who favor apps and entertainment over getting work done on the go will want to stick to the Android or Apple ecosystems, which offer larger content selections.

**KEY SPECS:** 10.6-inch (1,366 x 768) display, quad-core NVIDIA Tegra T30 processor, 32GB internal memory, 2GB RAM, 1.49 pounds, rated for up to eight hours of battery life.



**BUY**

**\$499+**

*You Might Also Like*



### LENOVO IDEAPAD YOGA 11

The ARM-powered Yoga 11 (due out soon) wins for most unique form factor: it sports a flip-and-fold design that lets it transform from a notebook into a slate and vice versa. In addition to that versatility, you get Lenovo's keyboard know-how and a Tegra 3 processor.

### ASUS VIVO TAB RT

This device features the thin-and-light design and long battery life we loved from ASUS' Android-based Transformer tablets, and the optional keyboard dock provides a decent (though slightly cramped) physical keyboard and touchpad.

**BUY**

**\$549**



# E-Readers

HOLIDAY  
GIFT GUIDE  
= 2012 =



**T**HOSE PREDICTING THE DEATH OF THE E-READER in 2012 at the hands of cheap 7-inch tablets received quite the surprise this year. The space is alive, thanks to heated competition between industry leaders such as Amazon and Barnes & Noble and some solid choices from the likes of Kobo and Sony. There are still plenty of options for those who like a little multimedia with their books — and don't mind doing their reading on an LCD. — *Brian Heater*



# E-READERS



## BARNES & NOBLE NOOK SIMPLE TOUCH

Sure, it's last year's model, but Barnes & Noble's Nook Simple Touch is still one of the top devoted e-ink readers out there. For the recently reduced price of \$99, you get a touchscreen product built specifically for the human hand, complete with physical page-turn buttons — an increasing rarity in the space. Of course, \$20 more will get you the device's newer, more illuminated successor, but it's hard to argue with a solid reader for under \$100.

**KEY SPECS:** 6-inch E Ink display with infrared touch, microSD slot, rated for two months of battery life.



**BUY**

**\$99**

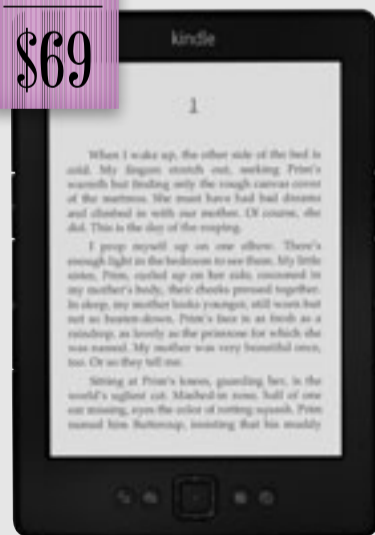
### *You Might Also Like*

#### AMAZON KINDLE

For a cool \$69, you get a 6-inch e-reader with built-in WiFi. There are sacrifices to be made here, however. If you want to strip the device of ads, you're going to have to pony up another \$20, and the product lacks both a touchscreen and a keyboard.

**BUY**

**\$69**



#### KOBO MINI

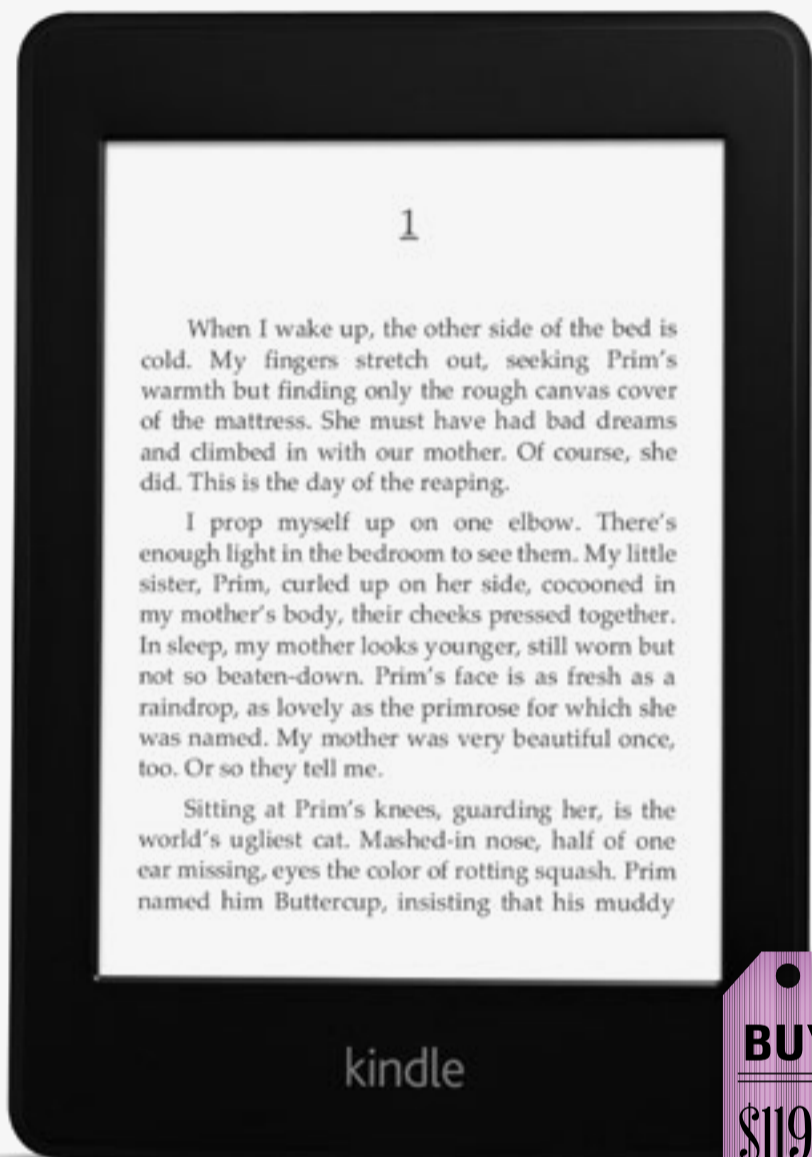
Newly emboldened by its purchase by Rakuten, Kobo has come out swinging with a trio of new devices. At the low end is the Kobo Mini, a 5-incher with a touch display, 2GB of built-in storage and an 800MHz processor in a 4.73-ounce package.

**BUY**

**\$80**



# E-READERS



**BUY**  
\$119+

## AMAZON KINDLE PAPERWHITE

Amazon may not be the first major manufacturer to offer up a nighttime reading solution, but darn if it didn't perfect the experience. Supposedly in development for four years, the Paperwhite's front-light solution is more evenly distributed, offering up a truer white experience than the competition. Add capacitive touch, sharper text, eight hours of battery life, the Kindle Store and Amazon's continued dedication to 3G book downloads, and you've got just about the best devoted e-reader money can buy.

**KEY SPECS:** 6-inch capacitive front-illuminated E Ink display, 2GB storage, optional 3G, rated for eight weeks of battery life with light on.

### *You Might Also Like*

#### BARNES & NOBLE NOOK SIMPLE TOUCH WITH GLOWLIGHT

Amazon may have taken some of the wind out of Barnes & Noble's sails with the launch of the Paperwhite, but the Nook Simple Touch with GlowLight is still a terrific choice — especially now, with that well-timed \$20 price drop. You get all the features that made the Nook Simple Touch a top reader, plus a lighter body and proprietary glowing technology.



**BUY**  
\$119

#### SONY READER PRS-T2

Sony didn't make too many changes to last year's model, retaining pinch-to-zoom and note-taking abilities courtesy of the dual-touch E Ink display. Noticeably missing is the front lighting that defined this year's competition, but this reader's still a solid choice — and buyers get a free "Harry Potter" book.



**BUY**  
\$130



# E-READERS



## AMAZON KINDLE FIRE HD

Last year's Kindle Fire felt more like a content delivery device than a solid 7-inch tablet. This year, however, the mega e-retailer went for broke, offering up a focus on hardware design that its previous model lacked. As the name implies, it has a new HD IPS display. Amazon has also improved Wi-Fi performance, and sound quality is stronger thanks to a pair of speakers on the rear of the device. All that plus great content selection equals a great \$199 tablet — including Special Offers, naturally.

**KEY SPECS:** 7-inch (1,280 x 800) IPS display, 16 / 32GB storage, micro-USB and micro-HDMI ports, rated for about 11 hours of battery life.



*You Might Also Like*

**BUY**  
**\$199+**



## BARNES & NOBLE NOOK HD

B & N continues its long history with 7-inch tablets that began with the Nook Color. This time out, it's taken some design cues from its own Simple Touch reader, with a stubby, comfortable design. The tablet offers a high-res (1,440 x 900 pixels) display for its price, along with profiles for family members, access to B&N-approved apps and 10.5 hours of use on a charge.



## KOBO ARC

Kobo has done its part to improve on the Vox, its first entry into the tablet space — even giving it a brand-new product name. Expected this holiday, this 7-incher features a 1,280 x 800, IPS display, a 1.5GHz processor from TI, Ice Cream Sandwich and — unlike much of the competition — access to the Google Play store.



# Laptops and

# Ultraportables

HOLIDAY  
GIFT GUIDE  
= 2012 =



**W**HETHER YOU'RE LOOKING FOR A MAINSTREAM laptop for heavy lifting or a light-weight ultraportable for your day-to-day tasks, there's no shortage of selection this season. From Windows 8 hybrids to big beasts with high-def screens, we've got the best in portable computing right here. — *Sarah Silbert*



*Holiday Gift Guide*

**2012**

**On the Cheap**

# LAPTOPS

## TOSHIBA SATELLITE S955

It's not an Ultrabook, but the S955 is 30 percent thinner than the previous-gen S series 15-incher, making it a pretty portable machine given that spacious screen size. Processor options include an AMD A8 APU and an Ivy Bridge Core i5 chip, and storage space tops off at 750GB. In terms of bang for your buck and configuration options, the S955 is hard to beat, and its aluminum lid even lends it a classy vibe.

**KEY SPECS:** 15.6-inch (1,366 x 768) display, 2.4GHz quad-core A8-4555M processor, 6GB of RAM, 750GB hard drive, AMD Radeon HD 7600G graphics, 0.97 inch thick, five pounds.



**BUY**

**\$650**



**BUY**

**\$728**

## DELL INSPIRON 13z

At less than an inch thick and weighing 3.97 pounds, this 13-incher is plenty portable. The latest 13z offers a latest-gen Core i5 processor and 8GB of RAM with a side of audio chops, thanks to Skullcandy speakers with Waves MaxxAudio 4.

*You Might Also Like*

## SONY VAIO E SERIES

We like the VAIO E's comfortable wrap design — and the Core i5 CPU, 500GB hard drive and generous selection of ports aren't too shabby, either. Optical media fans will appreciate the DVD drive.



**BUY**

**\$450+**



*Holiday Gift Guide*

2012

Mid-Range

# LAPTOPS

## HP ENVY dv6t QUAD EDITION

More of an entertainment powerhouse than your standard Pavilion dv6, this model packs discrete NVIDIA GeForce graphics, 1TB of storage and a Core i7 processor. Beats Audio provides superior sound quality and the spacious keyboard — complete with a full number pad — is perfect for gamers. Though the whole package is a substantial 5.66 pounds, the black aluminum finish is easy on the eyes.

**KEY SPECS:** 15.6-inch (1,366 x 768) display, 2.4GHz Core i7 processor, 8GB of RAM, 1TB hard drive, 1.16 inches thick, 5.66 pounds.



BUY

\$900

*You Might Also Like*



BUY

\$749+

## LENOVO IDEAPAD Y400

The 14-inch Y400 doesn't offer a touchscreen display — and its resolution is a modest 1,366 x 768 — but this machine will satisfy the DIYers on your list. The machine boasts an interchangeable HDD bay which users can swap out for dual graphics chips, extra storage space or an additional fan.

BUY

\$898



## SONY VAIO S13

The lightweight magnesium-alloy design (available in four cheery colors) manages to fit in some respectable amenities: a Core i5 CPU, a 750GB hard drive spinning at 7,200 RPM and an optical drive.



*Holiday Gift Guide*

**2012**

**Money's  
No Object**

# LAPTOPS



**BUY**

**\$1,699**

## 13-INCH APPLE MACBOOK PRO WITH RETINA DISPLAY

Apple has brought the stunning panel to a smaller form factor, sizing down the 15.4-inch notebook's 2,880 x 1,800 display to a 2,560 x 1,600 resolution for this 13.3-inch model. It's just as brilliant, though you'll encounter some app-scaling due to all those extra pixels. Retina aside, it's more than capable, with performance on a par with the non-Retina Pro, with the added benefit of an SSD and a slimmer body.

**KEY SPECS:** 13.1-inch (2,560 x 1,600) IPS display, 2.5GHz Core i5 processor, 8GB of RAM, 128GB SSD, Intel HD Graphics 4000, 0.75 inch thick, 3.57 pounds.

*You Might Also Like*

### SAMSUNG SERIES 7 CHRONOS

It's one step down from the Series 7 Gamer in terms of specs, but this machine is unmistakably top-of-the-line, with a Core i7 CPU, NVIDIA GeForce GT 640M graphics, a 15.6-inch (1,600 x 900) display and a brushed aluminum chassis.



**BUY**

**\$1,100**

### DELL XPS 15

The XPS 15 promises capable performance, with a Core i5 CPU with 6GB of RAM and NVIDIA GeForce graphics. And, as it rightly should at this price point, the 15.6-inch display boasts a 1080p resolution.



**BUY**

**\$1,218**



*Holiday Gift Guide*

**2012**

**Low-End to  
Mid-Range**

# ULTRAPORTABLES



**BUY**  
\$870

## SONY VAIO T13

The T13 Ultrabook has been around for some time now, but it still stands out for its many configuration options and robust spec list — including a Core i5 Ivy Bridge CPU, a 500GB hybrid hard drive with 4GB of RAM and a slick 3.54-pound metal chassis — offered at a surprisingly wallet-friendly price. To usher in the Windows 8 era, Sony added an edge-to-edge glass touch display as an option for this 13-inch machine, making it an even stronger contender for students and casual users.

**KEY SPECS:** 13-inch (1,366 x 768) capacitive touchscreen, Core i5-3317U processor with 4GB of RAM, 500GB hybrid hard drive, Intel HD Graphics 4000, 0.75 inch thick, weighs 3.54 pounds.

*You Might Also Like*

## SAMSUNG SERIES 5 ULTRA TOUCH

Touch doesn't have to come at a huge premium, as the Series 5 Ultra Touch so deftly demonstrates. For \$850, you get a 13-inch panel ready to handle finger input, a 500GB hard drive with 24GB of ExpressCache and a Core i5 Ivy Bridge CPU.



**BUY**  
\$850

## TOSHIBA SATELLITE U945

The U945 is a bargain-priced Ultrabook, and though it may sport a blue plastic coating rather than a more premium aluminum finish, it packs solid specs: a Core i5 processor, 6GB of RAM and a 500GB hard drive paired with a 32GB SSD for speedy boot-ups.



**BUY**  
\$800



*Holiday Gift Guide*

**2012**

**High-End**

# ULTRAPORTABLES

## HP SPECTRE XT TOUCHSMART

We're fans of the 13.3-inch Envy Spectre XT, which sports a great keyboard and touchpad and offers impressive performance in an attractive all-metal package. The 15.6-inch TouchSmart is even more enticing — with a 1080p IPS display (with touch support, of course) a generous selection of ports, Beats Audio and full copies of Adobe Photoshop Elements and Premiere Elements. The TouchSmart won't be shipping until December, but you can add it to your shopping list in the meantime.

**KEY SPECS:** 15.6-inch (1,920 x 1,080) IPS display, Ivy Bridge processors, 0.7 inch thick, weighs 4.77 pounds.



**BUY**

**\$1,400**

*You Might Also Like*

## MACBOOK AIR 13-INCH

Viewed alongside the new crop of touch-enabled Windows 8 machines, Apple's ultraportable may have a little less luster. But if the beneficiary of your generous gift giving can live with keyboard input, Core i5 power, Mountain Lion and a best-in-class glass trackpad then this is a winning combo.



**BUY**

**\$1,140**

## ACER ASPIRE S7

Yes, Acer's 13-inch Aspire S7 offers a bright 1080p IPS display, but its panel goes above and beyond with a design that can lie completely flat. Acer sweetens the deal with an included USB-to-Ethernet adapter and carrying case.



**BUY**

**\$1,400**



*Holiday Gift Guide*

2012

Hybrids

# ULTRAPORTABLES

## HP ENVY x2

HP's take on the Atom-powered laptop / tablet craze is an 11-inch slate with a detachable keyboard dock. It's not the form factor that's impressive, though: specs include NFC, Beats Audio and a 400-nit IPS display. There's also pen support, so users can interact with the device via the touchscreen, keyboard or stylus. You'll be able to have this lightweight, aluminum-built hybrid for \$850 once this ships in December — hardly chump change, but you get a lot for those buckaroos.

**KEY SPECS:** 11-inch [1,366 x 768] display, Clover Trail processor, 64GB of built-in storage, 0.33 inch thick, slate weighs 1.5 pounds / keyboard dock weighs 1.6 pounds.

BUY

\$850

hp ENVY x2

*You Might Also Like*



## LENOVO IDEATAB LYNX

With a dual-core Clover Trail processor, 32GB of solid-state storage and an 11.6-inch IPS display, the Lynx looks to be a solid standalone tablet. Add in the \$150 dock and you get 16 hours of battery life — when this hybrid hits the market in December.



## ASUS TRANSFORMER BOOK

With a spun-metal lid and a sleek silhouette, this convertible looks deceptively similar to the ASUS Zenbook. But detach the tablet from its keyboard dock and you have a Core i7-powered 13-inch slate. Look for it to drop in mid-December.



# *Fun Stuff!*

**HOLIDAY  
GIFT GUIDE**  
= 2012 =



**I**DEALLY, ALL THE GIFTS YOU'LL GIVE AND RECEIVE  
= fall under the “fun” category, but sometimes this de-  
scription is especially applicable. Welcome to the lighter side  
of tech, where you'll find gadgets meant to make life merrier  
rather than to impress with mile-long spec lists. That's not  
to say that these gizmos aren't productivity-friendly — the  
picks enable everything from learning to play the guitar to  
keeping New Year's resolutions on track. — *Sarah Silbert*



*Holiday Gift Guide*

2012

On the Cheap

# FUN STUFF!

## HEX3 APPTAG LASER BLASTER

Sure, there are plenty of blasters out there, but the Hex3 AppTag stands out for its ultra-easy setup — it communicates with your smartphone via high-frequency sound so no pairing is required. Plus, a removable pistol grip allows the unit to be attached to Nerf guns (and even real firearms, though that combo doesn't mix well with eggnog). As its name suggests, it's pre-loaded with several apps / games, and includes multi-player and single-player modes for some first-person shooter action.

**KEY SPECS:** Compatible with iPhones / iPods / Android devices, free AppTag apps, infrared beam and sensor for targeting, included pistol grip.



BUY

\$60



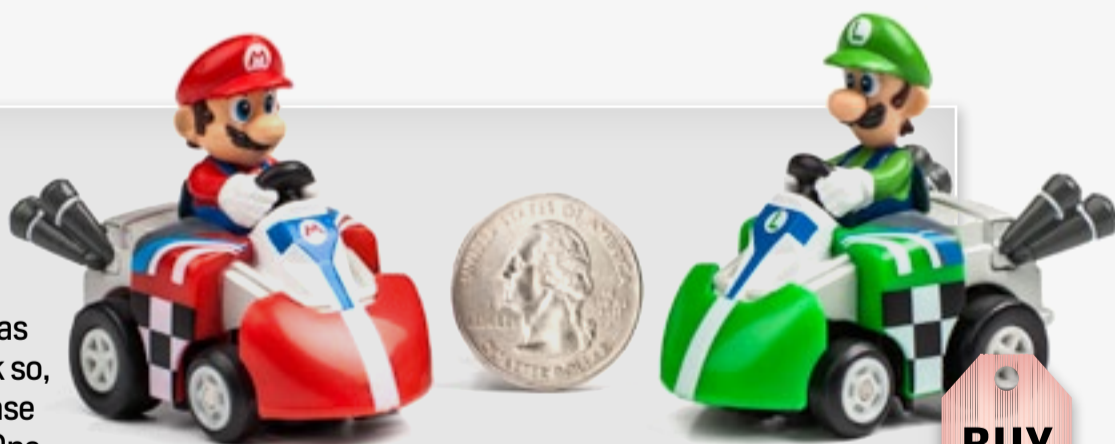
*You Might Also Like*

## FITBIT ONE

An activity tracker qualifying as "fun?" Not everyone will think so, but for those with a known case of the fitness bug, the Fitbit One will provide all the juicy stats. Steps, flights of stairs, calories burned and miles walked are all logged and uploaded to the Fitbit website, and the device also serves as a vibrating alarm clock.

BUY

\$99.95



## MARIO KART RACERS Q STEER R/C

Searching for a stocking stuffer, or roped into your office's Secret Santa gift exchange? Mini-sized Nintendo racers fit the bill in either case. The included remote control moves Mario, Luigi, Yoshi and Donkey Kong across the surface of your choice, and each car comes with spare tires, a banana peel and a turtle shell.

BUY

\$26



*Holiday Gift Guide*

2012

Mid-Range

# FUN STUFF!

## POWERPOT V

Who needs another piece of stainless steel cookware, really? The PowerPot V puts the rest of the kitchen to shame with its five watts of power for charging any gadget with a standard USB port. Of course, it also functions like any old pot — it converts the heat into electrical power, after all — but the 3-foot flame-resistant cord adds a serving of battery life along with boiled water for tonight's spaghetti.

**KEY SPECS:** 5W maximum output, USB 2.0 port, 1.4-liter capacity.



BUY

\$149

*You Might Also Like*



## ROSETTA STONE LEVEL 1

There's no better gift than the ability to ask "where's the bathroom?" in your choice of 27 languages. The Level 1 CD-ROM package provides a good taste of the language-learning method before you commit to the \$399 all-inclusive set.

## ION ALL-STAR GUITAR

With an iPad docked into its body, the simulator displays guitar strings and teaches aspiring musicians notes and chords via an included app. The fretboard sports 84 LEDs that light up to show correct fingering.



BUY

\$130



*Holiday Gift Guide*

2012

Money's  
No Object

# FUN STUFF!

## MAKERBOT REPLICATOR 2

The latest 3D printer from MakerBot is every bit as lust-worthy as the previous-generation machine. A 410-cubic-inch build volume gives creative minds ample space to get started on that career in vinyl toys, and the new powder-coated steel frame looks classier and promises greater ruggedness. The included 1-pound spool of Natural PLA filament should be more than enough to crank out a few winning designs with the aid of the MakerWare software tool.

**KEY SPECS:** Build volume of 410 cubic inches, 100-micron resolution, MakerWare software bundle, connectivity via USB and SD card (included).

BUY

\$2,199



*You Might Also Like*



## THE ARKEG

Gift a friend the Arkeg and you're effectively supplying the party. Games from Midway, Capcom and more are pre-loaded and ready to run on the 24-inch LCD display, and the 5-gallon keg below keeps thirstiness at bay.

## 2013 ZERO S ELECTRIC MOTORCYCLE

The bad news: the 2013 Zero S isn't actually available until January, so gift recipients will have to make do with an IOU. The good news: you'll be forgiven for the wait when you mention the 68 foot-pounds of torque, 54 horsepower and 95 MPH max speed.



# Gaming

HOLIDAY  
GIFT GUIDE  
= 2012 =



**N**OTHING SAYS “HOLIDAYS” LIKE SNUGGLING UP with your favorite gaming device, but 2012 is a year of change, with PC graphics cards dropping in price and outclassing console competition, and new entrants like the PlayStation Vita and Nintendo Wii U offering novel approaches to classic games. So, what should you get that gamer in your life? — *Ben Gilbert*



# GAMING

## NINTENDO DSi XL

Sure, the Nintendo 3DS is the new hotness, but there's an enormous breadth of excellent (and inexpensive) content on Nintendo's final DSi iteration, the XL. With games ranging in price from \$1 to \$30, the DSi XL is a great choice for kids (and parents), essentially guaranteeing to keep the long-term financial investment low. Also good for kids and parents? It's nigh indestructible. The DSi XL may be hard to find brand-new in stores, but a pre-owned one will cost even less than the \$130 (and up) going rate.

**KEY SPECS:** Dual 4.2-inch LCD screens (256 x 192), SD card slot, rated for three to 12 hours of battery life, weighs 314g (0.7 pound).



**BUY**  
\$180

### *You Might Also Like*

## NEO GEO X

Give the gift of handheld nostalgia this year with SNK Playmore's Neo Geo X handheld. The gorgeous little machine carries a \$130 price tag by itself, or you can pony up another \$70 for the special edition (which includes a bevy of sweet peripherals).



**BUY**  
\$130



**BUY**  
\$75

## SKYLANDERS: GIANTS STARTER PACK

*Skylanders: Spyro's Adventure* took the game industry by surprise and became a breakout hit. This year, Activision and Toys For Bob are upping the ante with *Skylanders: Giants* and it (thankfully) works with all those toys you bought last year.



# GAMING

## SONY PLAYSTATION VITA

The PlayStation Vita may not be in the best place sales-wise, but there's a wealth of content available for Sony's second entry in the portable console market. The 5-inch OLED touchscreen is bright and responsive, the controls and button layout are comfortable and graphics outclass the Nintendo 3DS' performance. Yes, at \$250, it's still too expensive, but at this point there are more than enough good reasons to pick one up (*Gravity Rush*, *LittleBigPlanet* and *Sound Shapes* come to mind).

**KEY SPECS:** 5-inch multi-touch display (960 x 544), ARM Cortex A9 processor, WiFi support, weighs 260g (0.6 pound).



**BUY**

**\$250**

*You Might Also Like*



## NINTENDO Wii U

Nintendo's Wii U may still have work to do in convincing gamers of its worth, but the early adopters among us will assuredly want to snag a first-run system when it launches this November. A huge list of launch games certainly doesn't hurt, either.

## iPAD MINI

Yup, seriously. Here we are, suggesting you get yourself an iPad mini for gaming. There are simply too many good iOS games to overlook Apple's new, smaller tablet. (Have you played *Super Hexagon*?!) Bonus: it does a bunch of other stuff too.



**BUY**

**\$329**



*Holiday Gift Guide*

**2012**

**Money's  
No Object**

# GAMING



*You Might Also Like*



## SECOND-GEN RAZER BLADE GAMING LAPTOP

The Razer Blade laptop is a beautiful, thin, powerful gaming laptop — with a prohibitively high price. But if the sky's the limit when it comes to your holiday budget, we can't suggest a better way to spend a huge wad of cash on a hardcore gamer.



## DIGITAL STORM BOLT

Next-gen gaming is already here; you just have to pay a premium for it. The Bolt Gaming PC from Digital Storm is no exception, especially if you shell out for the high-end model equipped with NVIDIA's GeForce GTX 680.

## ALIENWARE X51 MINI GAMING DESKTOP

The Alienware X51 is just a touch larger than your average gaming console, but it's considerably more powerful. After all, it packs NVIDIA's GTX 660 graphics chip and an Intel Core i7 processor with 1TB of HDD memory. The X51 can be easily connected to a living room TV for use as a media center and Steam Big Picture Mode game box. Kitting it out all the way comes with a hefty price, of course.

**KEY SPECS:** Core i7-3770 processor with 16GB of RAM, NVIDIA GeForce GTX 660 graphics with 1.5GB of dedicated RAM, weighs 12.1 pounds.



# HD TV and

# Home Theater

HOLIDAY  
GIFT GUIDE  
= 2012 =



**I**T'S BEEN A GREAT YEAR FOR HOME ENTERTAINMENT, with geek-friendly blockbusters ruling the box office, HD streamers gaining popularity and a bevy of pixel-dense TVs hitting the market. If you've been waiting to treat a loved one (or yourself) to some new gear, now's the perfect time to leap in. — *Daniel Cooper*



*Holiday Gift Guide*

2012

On the Cheap

# HDTV AND HOME THEATER

## APPLE TV

Yes, there are plenty of other media streamers out there — at lower price points, no less — but if you're already inside Apple's content ecosystem, this compact box deserves a place under your TV. AirPlay streaming ports content from your iPad, iPhone or iPod to the big screen, and integration with Hulu and Netflix — plus Digital Copy support — gives you access to endless media options.

**KEY SPECS:** A5 processor, 512MB of RAM, 1080p, 802.11a/g/b/n.

BUY

\$96



*You Might Also Like*



BUY

\$35

## 'MARVEL'S THE AVENGERS' BLU-RAY

The Incredible Hulk, Iron Man, Captain America, Thor and, you know, the other ones team up to defeat Earth's greatest threat. If you're looking for a disc to show off your new home theater system come December 25th, this is the one.

## 'THE DARK KNIGHT RISES' LIMITED EDITION COWL PACK

If you've been practicing your gravelly voice for the release of "The Dark Knight Rises" then surely you need a replica cowl to finish off the impersonation. That's where this limited-edition Blu-ray set comes in, with a Bane-damaged mask to call your very own.



BUY

\$36



Holiday Gift Guide

2012

Mid-Range

# HDTV AND HOME THEATER



## PLAYSTATION 3

(SLIM / LATE 2012)

While it's a little more expensive than your average Blu-ray player, there's no doubt that it's the best-equipped option. The third major revision to Sony's PlayStation 3 isn't the most exciting or fresh, but if you want a device to stash under your TV that'll keep everyone entertained with any media you can throw at it, there are few players that offer as much bang for your buck.



**KEY SPECS:**  
250GB hard drive, bundled *Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception* game, free PlayStation Network membership, 7.5 pounds.

**BUY**

**\$270**



*You Might Also Like*

## PANASONIC BDT220

Fancy a Blu-ray player that lets you connect to Facebook, Hulu, Netflix and Skype? The BDT220 offers that, plus the ability to convert regular discs to 3D. DLNA capability is on board and you can use your smartphone as a remote.

**BUY**

**\$100**



**BUY**

**\$650**

## YAMAHA YHT-697BL HOME THEATER

Yamaha's new five-speaker home theater-in-a-box will play nice with every gadget in your arsenal. In addition to the usual features like a 100W subwoofer, it has an Ethernet port, AirPlay, pass-through 4K and 3D video, DLNA and a front-facing USB port.



*Holiday Gift Guide*

**2012**

**Money's  
No Object**

# HDTV AND HOME THEATER

## SONY BRAVIA XBR-84X900

If you aren't a Major League Baseball player, spending \$25,000 on an HDTV might seem a tad excessive. Indeed, this 84-inch panel is super-sized in every way: it's four times as dense as your average 1080p display, with built-in WiFi and full HD 3D. Of course, it's probably worth reiterating that it's 84 inches — that's just about the size of a double bed. That said, there's really no better (or bigger) way to show someone you love them if you've got the dough.

**KEY SPECS:** 4K resolution, 50W sound, capable of presenting two full HD screens for two-player games with SimulView.

**BUY** \$25,000

*You Might Also Like*

### SAMSUNG UN60ES8000 HDTV

Capable of running a variety of apps (including Facebook and Twitter) and sporting a built-in webcam and a classy design, Samsung's super-skinny, 60-inch Smart TV is destined to improve any room you decide to hang it in.

**BUY**

\$2,998

### SONY VPL-HW50ES PROJECTOR

For discerning cinephiles who want to enjoy movies on a 100-inch wall rather than a 40-inch screen, a projector's the only way to go. Sony's 3D unit will spray 1080p visuals across any flat surface, with a 1,700-lumen bulb keeping colors vivid.

**BUY**

\$3,998



# Smartphones

HOLIDAY  
GIFT GUIDE  
= 2012 =



**I**F YOU HAVE A GADGET JUNKIE IN YOUR LIFE, THERE'S a good chance they're craving a new smartphone. Whether you're on a tight budget or have a fat wallet, simply look to our surefire list of the best and most unique mobile devices to place under the tree. But enough with the chatter... let's start shopping! —Zachary Lutz



# SMARTPHONES

## HTC ONE X

One of our favorite smartphones of the year is currently an outright steal. The HTC One X for AT&T combines excellent performance, a fantastic camera and one of the best displays on the market into one stunning handset. We've little doubt that any gadget fan in your life will love the One X, which is set to get even better with an upgrade to Android 4.1. The same is true for its alter ego on Sprint, the EVO 4G LTE, which combines much

of what we love from the One X and adds a dedicated camera button, a larger battery, removable storage and a handy kickstand.

**KEY SPECS:** 1.5GHz dual-core Snapdragon S4, 4.7-inch HD (1,280 x 720) S-LCD 2 display, 8MP rear / 1.3MP front cameras, 16GB built-in storage, Android 4.0.



### *You Might Also Like*

**BUY**

**\$80**

## MOTOROLA DROID RAZR M

The Droid RAZR M for Verizon is an outright budget superstar. The phone boasts a speedy dual-core processor, dependable battery life and a fantastic still camera. Weak points include a sub-premium qHD display and a lackluster video camera, but for the price this is an incredibly well-rounded smartphone.

**BUY**

**\$20**



## SAMSUNG GALAXY S BLAZE 4G

Don't expect it to go toe to toe with our other budget contenders, but the Galaxy S Blaze 4G is an excellent value for T-Mobile customers. The phone offers robust performance, long battery life and excellent call quality. It also features a truly respectable camera.





# SMARTPHONES

## GALAXY S III

While most of us prefer HTC's high-end offerings at AT&T and Sprint, the Galaxy S III is an excellent smartphone in its own right. It also has the distinct advantage of being available for all of the major national carriers. The Galaxy S III boasts a spacious and beautiful display, an excellent camera, fantastic performance and solid battery life. Needless to say, it's certain to make any gadget lover giddy. Better yet, like the One X, the Galaxy S III is set to receive an upgrade to Jelly Bean in the near future.

**KEY SPECS:** 1.5GHz dual-core Snapdragon S4, 4.8-inch HD (1,280 x 720) Super AMOLED display, 8MP rear / 2MP front cameras, 16GB or 32GB built-in storage, Android 4.0.



**BUY**  
\$50  
SPRINT  
\$100  
AT&T  
\$150  
VERIZON  
\$280  
T-MOBILE

*You Might Also Like*



## MOTOROLA DROID RAZR HD

One of the most anticipated smartphones of the season is the Droid RAZR HD for Verizon. As we learned, the device is a huge improvement over the original Droid RAZR, with excellent performance, a higher-res display and gobs of battery life. We're also particularly fond of its lightweight implementation of ICS.

**BUY**  
\$150

## NOKIA LUMIA 920

The Lumia 920 deserves special consideration for the shutterbug in your life, with a unique floating lens and sensor that brings unparalleled image stabilization and low-light performance. It's quite a value, too: purchasers get Nokia's music streaming service and a free wireless charging pad. If the carrier is a deal-breaker, we're also big fans of the HTC 8X (on AT&T, T-Mobile and Verizon).



**BUY**  
\$100



# SMARTPHONES



*You Might Also Like*



**BUY**

**\$300**

SPRINT

AT&T

VERIZON

T-MOBILE

## SAMSUNG GALAXY NOTE II

With its wicked-fast quad-core processor, the Galaxy Note II is among the leaders of the pack in terms of sheer performance. It also boasts a beautiful and spacious HD display, an amazing camera and Android 4.1 (Jelly Bean). And, of course, there's the S Pen, which brings unparalleled functionality such as the ability to quickly jot down notes and annotate photos.

**BUY**

**\$299**

8GB

**\$349**

16GB



## NEXUS 4

For an undiluted Android experience, it doesn't get much better than the Nexus 4. The unlocked phone provides a much-improved display and camera when compared to the Galaxy Nexus. Yes, it costs a bit more than what you'd typically find on contract, but you'll save cash in the long run by joining up with carriers like T-Mobile or Simple Mobile, which offer pricing incentives for bringing your own handset.

## iPhone 5

If you're looking to make this holiday season truly memorable for someone, the iPhone 5 is your go-to device. Available for AT&T, Sprint, Verizon and a number of regional carriers, Cupertino's latest ranks among the most sought-after smartphones of the year. It boasts snappy performance, a top-notch display, commendable battery life and an excellent camera — all wrapped in a truly beautiful enclosure. If you're really willing to splurge, be sure to grab either the 32GB or 64GB model, which will allow your loved ones to fill their phones to the brim with their favorite movies, music and photos.

### KEY SPECS:

1.3GHz dual-core A6, 4-inch Retina (1,136 x 640) IPS display, 8MP rear / 1.2MP front cameras, 16GB / 32GB / 64GB built-in storage, iOS 6.



**BUY**

**\$199**

16GB

**\$299**

32GB

**\$399**

64GB



# ESC

DISTRO  
11.16.12

**VISUALIZED**

## EMPIRE ELECTION METER



The Empire State Building's upper tower frequently treats New York City to a colorful light show celebrating popular holidays, but for Election Day last week it teamed up with CNN to offer a more informational display. President Obama was represented in blue and former Gov. Mitt Romney in red as the top-most tower gauged incoming electoral votes won for each candidate. As the voting day progressed and CNN's projections were released, the building's light meter tipped towards blue, visually confirming to the NYC skyline, Barack Obama's re-election as president.

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF AP / DONALD TRAILL



The week that was in 140 characters or less.

# Queen's Choice, Twitter's Foreign Affairs and Calculus in Color

DISTRO  
11.16.12

ESC

REHASHED

@kaffblock

Since when are  
Sailor Mercury  
glasses A REAL  
THING?

@JNGold

I wouldn't be opposed to putting a Nokia based "Here" map app on my home screen. Beats having to use Google maps, Oh wait....

@tonystuczynski

Guys. What I'm about to tell you, will change your life forever. Texas Instruments is releasing a COLOR TI84 CALCULATOR. HOLY SHITTTT.

@DennisTweety

So the Queen uses a Galaxy Note 10.1 eh? I guess if it's good enough for the Queen it's good enough for us plebs.

@MikeIsaac

Wonder if when  
Twitter was  
starting out, it  
ever thought it'd  
have to intervene  
in ISRAELI ARAB  
RELATIONS

THE STRIP

BY BOX BROWN



## COMPUTER SPACE



Arcade video games got off to a pretty funky start back in 1971 when Nolan Bushnell, who would later found Atari Inc., adapted one of his favorite computer games to the arcade format, complete with a curvy fiberglass design. Based on *Spacewar!*, developed in 1962, *Computer Space* side-stepped the need for costly computer hardware and became the first commercially viable coin-operated *video* game. While the futuristic cabinet design was a hit, the game failed to catch on with the average user who had to learn the relatively new skill of maneuvering a spaceship using only four buttons.



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